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UN-backed report spotlights links between global warming and extreme weather



Climate-related disasters like flooding are on the rise

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A United Nations-backed report confirms the link between climate change and current trends in extreme weather such as floods and heat waves, and warns that existing measures, even in developed countries, are not enough to cope with the severity of these events.

The report, whose summary was approved today by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change ([IPCC](#)) in Kigali, Uganda, reveals that high and low daily temperatures have risen on a global scale due to the rise of greenhouse gases, causing an increase in floods, heat waves, droughts, and other extremes associated with damage caused by high sea levels and heavy precipitation.

The report also states that extreme weather conditions have become more powerful and dangerous as a result of climate change, increasing the vulnerability of densely-populated regions in coastal zones as well as populations that live in conditions of poverty and have limited ways to cope with natural disasters.

For the high-emissions scenario, it is likely that the frequency of hot days will increase by a factor of 10 in most regions of the world

“The world has entered a deadly new age where today’s extreme weather events are likely to become the norm,” [said](#) Margareta Wahlström, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction.

“Those who are already vulnerable to hunger and malnutrition, living without access to clean water and sanitation, and living in informal settlements have the least capacity to cope and adapt. The IPCC special report is a plea to governments worldwide to ensure that disaster risk reduction is at the heart of sustainable development during this century of climate change,” she said.

The report forecasts that hot days will become even hotter and occur more often on a global scale.

“For the high-emissions scenario, it is likely that the frequency of hot days will increase by a factor of 10 in most regions of the world,” said Thomas Stocker, co-chair of one of the report’s working groups.

“Likewise, heavy precipitation will occur more often, and the wind speed of tropical cyclones will increase while their number will likely remain constant or decrease.”

The summary of the [*Special Report on Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation*](#) (SREX) also warns against the catastrophic costs of inaction on climate change, stating that currently no country is fully prepared to deal with the effects of global warming, while also providing governments with adaptation tools and guidelines to tackle this issue.

“This summary for policy-makers provides insights into how disaster risk management and adaptation may assist vulnerable communities to better cope with a changing climate in a world of inequalities,” said Rajendra Pachauri, chair of the IPCC.

The report points out that although there are many options for decreasing risk, most have not been implemented.

“We hope this report can be a scientific foundation for sound decisions on infrastructure, urban development, public health, and insurance, as well as for planning – from community organizations to international disaster risk management,” said Chris Field, another co-chair of one the report’s working groups.

“The ability of the world to become more climate-resilient will largely depend on the speed with which emissions can be decreased, and the extent to which the poor and vulnerable populations in developing countries are provided with necessary finance and technology to adapt to the inevitable,” said Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change ([UNFCCC](#)).

To keep track of developed countries’ financial support developing countries’ efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the UNFCCC launched today an online portal that allows governments, institutions and individuals to access information on these contributions, making the process more transparent

Developed countries pledged to give \$30 billion between 2010 and 2012 to help developing countries tackle climate change, a commitment that was reiterated at the UN Climate Change Conference in Cancun last year.

In a statement released by UNFCCC, Ms. Figueres called on governments to step up their efforts towards this cause at the UN Climate Change Conference in Durban at the end of the month.

“When governments meet in 10 days’ time for the UN Climate Change Conference in Durban, it is important that they understand the extent to which climate finance has been provided by developed countries,” Ms. Figueres said.

“This allows for transparency and trust-building among governments on the fulfilment of financial commitments and the projects supported by the funds which benefit people in developing countries.”

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